Conservation Action Plan for Saskatchewan's Park Lands

Renewing Our Commitment to Natural and Cultural Heritage

SASKATCHEWAN
PARKS

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Renewing Our Commitment to Natural and Cultural Heritage

A Conservation Action Plan for Saskatchewan's Park Lands

A report by the
Intra-Departmental
Steering Committee

2001

Foreword

In 1995 and 1996, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) undertook a comprehensive public review of the value and future of provincial park lands. The work was completed in 1997, when the Parks Tomorrow Working Group presented the government with a document entitled, *Directions for the 21st Century*. Provincial park lands were reconfirmed as being highly valued by the public for not only supporting outdoor recreation and generating economic benefits from tourism, but also for providing interpretation of natural and cultural resources, protecting "wildlands and wildlife" and supporting provincial efforts to conserve biodiversity.

This Conservation Action Plan provides policy direction for the management of natural and cultural resources and recommends a five-year action plan consistent with the recommendations of "Parks Tomorrow".

Acknowledgments

The Conservation Action Plan was developed with the support of an Intra-departmental Steering Committee, co-chaired by SERM's Parks and Special Places Branch and Policy and Legislation. The Steering Committee consists of representatives from each of SERM's EcoRegions and program branches, as well as Saskatchewan Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing (MACH), the agency responsible for *The Heritage Property Act* during the course of this project.

The co-chairs of the Intra-departmental Steering Committee wish to express their appreciation and gratitude to the following individuals who assisted in the preparation of this report as well as Sharon Coffin, Ann Marshall, Myra Farrell and Wendy Boyle for editing and production of the final report.

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Executive Summary

The people of Saskatchewan have assembled, over the last 70 years, an outstanding system of park lands, which includes 34 provincial parks and numerous other sites worthy of protection for their natural, cultural and/or recreational values. Within the system are areas representative of most of Saskatchewan's ecoregions, including northern and southern (island) forests, grasslands, rivers, lakes, significant cultural sites of pre- and post-European contact, and the plants and animals that live on these lands, some of which are considered at risk. The park land system continues to evolve and change but a fundamental principle, recognized through the Parks Tomorrow process, is that these lands and resources are to be protected and held in trust for future generations.

Since the inception of the park land system, Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management (SERM) has focused on developing and providing recreation opportunities. Natural and cultural resources have been managed sporadically, dependant on the prevailing issues and availability of staff or funding. With increased threats to biodiversity and public use, loss of integrity of both natural and cultural resources, proactive rather than reactive management is required. Protection of natural and cultural resources now requires clear policy direction, and active and informed management to a degree unimaginable when park lands were originally designated.

Since SERM adopted ecosystem-based management, there is a renewed opportunity for greater integration of the department's resource programs with the parks program. With proactive management, park lands, and provincial parks in particular, can serve as model areas to demonstrate and inform the public on ecosystem-based management and the integral relationship between humans and landscapes. Hence, the vision presented in the Conservation Action Plan is twofold:

(1) The natural and cultural resources on park lands will be managed in an integrated, systematic, proactive way, to contribute to the maintenance of ecological and cultural integrity.
(2) SERM will demonstrate excellence in land and natural and cultural resource management by using park lands as models of ecosystem-based management.

The overarching policy direction for all park management and use flows from section 3 of the *The Parks Act, 1986* that states:

(1) Park land is dedicated to the people of Saskatchewan and visitors to Saskatchewan for their enjoyment and education.
(2) The natural, prehistoric and historic resources of park land are to be maintained for the benefit of future generations.

The Conservation Action Plan articulates 11 overriding principles and 23 policies to protect natural and cultural resources. Policy statements are also presented for the full range of

management activities that encompass support resource management.

The objectives and actions that are being recommended by the Conservation Action Plan have implications for work at the park, EcoRegional and provincial levels. The Conservation Action Plan provides the framework for managing natural and cultural resources over the next five years. The recommendations are summarized as:

Discovering, Managing Information and Communicating What We Have:

There is lack of park-specific information and little knowledge or understanding by staff and the public about the natural and cultural resources encompassed by park lands, what threatens the integrity of the resources and how to manage them for the future.

- Existing resource information will be compiled on individual park lands and made accessible.
- A data management system and cultural artifacts storage system will be developed.
- Awareness of park land resources and the need for stewardship will be increased in all those who deliver and benefit from park programs, as well as potential management partners.
- Sites of special significance to Aboriginal peoples will be identified.

Prioritize Areas and Issues for Management

Priorities need to be identified and action taken on areas at greatest risk or issues that pose the greatest threat to ecological and cultural integrity.

- Using the risk assessment model, the provincial parks with ecological and cultural integrity most at risk will be identified, as well as those issues that pose the greatest threat across the park land system.
- Conservation will be undertaken after issues are prioritized and management options assessed.
- Areas degraded by recreation use will be restored.
- Inappropriate renewable and non-renewable resource use will be reduced or phased out.
- An assessment of the potential impacts of climate change on park lands and adaptations will be undertaken.

Planning

Conservation strategies and plans (where sufficient information is available) are required to guide the management of the whole park land system and individual park lands.

- For natural environment and historic provincial parks at most risk, resource inventories and analysis will be prepared, along with conservation plans.

- For natural environment and historic provincial parks at most risk, resource inventories and analysis will be prepared, along with conservation plans.
- At a minimum, at least one natural environment provincial park per EcoRegion and two historic parks at most risk provincially will have a conservation plan developed in five years.
- The park management strategies format will be revised to enhance conservation.
- The park land system will be assessed for ecological integrity.
- Zoning regulations will be developed.
- Guidelines for Aboriginal use of natural and cultural resource on park lands will be cooperatively developed with Aboriginal peoples.

Research and Monitoring

Park lands provide excellent opportunities for research and ecological health monitoring.

- Research needs and potential support will be identified and communicated to potential partners.
- Park lands to be managed as benchmark/control sites for provincial ecological health monitoring will be identified.

Funding

The conservation needs of the park program need to be fully integrated into the department's activities and enhanced funding options reviewed.

- The direction of the Conservation Action Plan will be fully integrated into SERM's strategic plan, EcoRegional and program branch work plans.
- Additional sources of funding for conservation will be assessed: increased non-renewable resource use fees, a conservation levy on park fees, additional provincial funding and partnership funding.
- An active conservation partnership promotion campaign will be initiated.

As SERM, and its partners, implements all the proposed actions within the five-year time frame, it will have initiated a systematic and integrated approach to conserving park lands and demonstrated a commitment to maintain resources "for the benefit of future generations".

Section One - Introduction, Vision and Principles

One of the key recommendations arising from the last major public review of provincial parks, known as Parks Tomorrow (1997), focused on SERM's protection mandate. The recommendation to government was framed as an objective:

> **"to enhance the protection of natural and cultural values and to ensure that park lands are models of managing for ecological and cultural integrity."**[1]

The Conservation Action Plan recommends policy and management actions to be taken over the next five years to meet this objective across the entire park land system.

1.1 The Value of Park Land

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to establishing and managing a network of park lands[2] that encompass a range of Saskatchewan's ecological systems and cultural resources, significant and/or unique recreation features, landscapes and tourism opportunities. Park land should be managed consistent with the purpose of parks as articulated in Section 3 of the *The Parks Act, 1986.* It states:

(1) Park land is dedicated to the people of Saskatchewan and visitors to Saskatchewan for their enjoyment and education.

(2) The natural, prehistoric and historic resources of park land are to be maintained for the benefit of future generations.

Park lands encompass environmental, social and economic values. Environmental values relate to the protection of representative and unique landscapes and natural resources, the opportunity for scientific study and research, the establishment of benchmark/control sites for provincial ecological health monitoring and innovative ecosystem and resource management. Social values

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1 Integrity refers to "an assessment of a system and the degree to which it is unimpaired, sound or complete" (J. and K. Dunster, 1995).

"An ecosystem has integrity when it is deemed characteristic for its natural region, including the composition and abundance of native species and biological communities, rates of change and supporting processes." In plain language, ecosystems have integrity when they have their native components (plants, animals and other organisms) and processes (such as growth and reproduction) intact. (Report of the Panel on the Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks, 2000)

"Cultural resources are physical entities with qualities such as mass, colour and texture, some of which express historical or cultural associations. Integrity addresses the degree to which behavior and ideas are manifested in the form and substance of a resource. A cultural resource has integrity if it retains material attributes associated with its social values.(National Park Service [U.S.] Cultural Resource Management, 1997)

2 The term "park lands" refers to all lands designated pursuant to *The Parks Act*: provincial parks, recreation sites, historic sites, protected areas and park land reserves.

relate to the protection of cultural and outdoor recreation resources and lands and waters for traditional Aboriginal use. Social values also encompass environmental and cultural heritage education and interpretation and protect The economic values relate to tourism, cultural tourism and ecotourism as well as the economic benefits that may be derived from resource management activities. To ensure these values persist into the future, individual park lands, regardless of their classification and zoning, should be managed to minimize the negative impacts of past and future human influence and to protect ecological and cultural integrity.

1.2 Natural and Cultural Resources Management

Natural resource[3] management of park lands has largely been reactive to date. Only a few park lands have comprehensive inventories, all of which date back several decades. Although park managers are aware of specific ecological problems, there is little information about the overall integrity of park land ecosystems and the specific management required. Deteriorating forests and grasslands are treated for ailments, often at considerable expense (e.g., burning to rejuvenate aging grasslands and forests, biological control of invasive exotic plants, removal of trees affected by Dutch elm disease, restoration of areas subject to overuse). Very little ecological monitoring occurs. There is also incomplete baseline information for interpretive programming.

Cultural resources[4] suffer from the same approach. The emphasis has been on reacting, primarily to use and developments, rather than defining and responding to issues. The last review of guidelines or policies related to management of cultural resources occurred 15 years ago. Inventories and monitoring of cultural resources are incomplete, so there is no system for identifying or ranking threats associated with these resources.

This is an opportune time to establish conservation policies and management priorities for park lands. The department has decentralized and reorganized on an ecoregional basis. SERM has embraced ecosystem-based management and is in the process of reviewing management priorities to address the most critical risks. There are significant threats to ecological and cultural integrity that need to be addressed, but unlike other protected area systems (i.e., Parks Canada), widespread recreational and tourism overuse are not the most acute concerns. A renewed commitment to a more proactive, integrative management approach is needed "**to enhance the protection of natural and cultural values and to ensure that park lands are models of managing for ecological and cultural integrity.**"

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3 Natural resources "encompass renewable resources, such as forests, water, wildlife, soils, etc., and non-renewable resources, such as coal, oil and ores, all of which are natural assets." (J. and K. Dunster, 1995).

4 Cultural resources include anything of historic value, meaning any items or activities associated with aspects of human history, associated documentation or records, and reconstructions. In some cases, the significance of the feature may be of international, national, provincial or regional importance. Cultural resources that draw historic value from association with human activity and the natural environment will be valued for both cultural and natural characteristics.

1.3 Vision

The vision for the Conservation Action Plan describes the state of conservation management at the end of five years.

> ***The natural and cultural resources on park lands will have an integrated, systematic, proactive approach to management that contributes to the maintenance of ecological and cultural integrity.***
>
> ***Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management will demonstrate excellence in land and natural and cultural resource management by using park lands as models of ecosystem-based management.***

Park lands provide the ideal opportunity for the demonstration of department conservation programs and as forums for educating staff and the public about sustainable use. The clearly defined goals and relatively controlled environment of a park provide opportunities for the assessment and evaluation of a program's success, while the park receives much needed management.

1.4 Principles

The diversity of natural and cultural resources in Saskatchewan is unique to Canada and the world. Protecting diverse landscapes is a vital contribution to local, provincial, national and global biodiversity efforts. The following principles have been developed to guide the management of Saskatchewan's park lands.

1. **Protect and respect the values of each park land area.**

   Each park land area is valued for its unique and/or representative natural and/or cultural resources. Management activities, consistent with the policies and direction of the Conservation Action Plan, will ensure that an area's significance will not be jeopardized by any activity.

2. **Demonstrate respect for Treaty rights and the significance and value of park lands to Aboriginal cultures.**

   In recognition of the traditional importance of many park land areas for sustaining Aboriginal life and culture, we will continue to encourage cooperative conservation of natural values and the preservation of culturally important resources and traditions.

3. **Maintain ecological processes and biodiversity through the conservation and management of healthy and functioning ecosystems.**

   Park lands will be managed in a manner that respects natural biodiversity and ecological systems.

4. **Allow for minimal interference in natural processes, while respecting the need to protect the recreation, tourism and aesthetic values of park lands and adjacent land values.**

   Natural ecosystems change over time, and park lands are influenced by factors beyond their boundaries. Interference with natural processes will occur only in specific instances, where the arrest of a natural process is necessary to protect other outstanding values and there is little risk to resources and users and adjacent landowners. The level of interference will range from minimal to proactive. If restoration or rehabilitation is determined a priority for recreation, tourism or aesthetic reasons, it will be done in a manner that minimizes negative impacts.

5. **Conservation will take precedence over recreational activities outside defined public service (core) areas, and when natural or cultural resources are at significant risk as a result of those recreational activities and support services.**

   SERM will permit only those recreational activities and support services compatible with sustaining natural and cultural resources,.

6. **Manage within the limits of the carrying capacity of natural and cultural resources.**

   Recreational use continues to grow, as does the need for revenue generation to help offset management costs. There are limits to how much recreation can be accommodated, after which the resource no longer has integrity or is not desirable for use. The precautionary principle will apply when establishing limits to use.

7. **Species, habitats and cultural resources at risk (rare, threatened or endangered) will be given special management attention.**

   The terms rare, threatened and endangered are defined for species at risk by legislation. Management of specific species or habitats may be needed to ensure their survival.

   Sensitive cultural resources, ranging from burial grounds or sacred places to museum artifacts can be very fragile. Management activities for sensitive cultural resources will vary by type of feature.

8. **Demonstrate leadership in cooperation and coordination to protect and manage the landscape and cultural values within, and adjacent to, park land boundaries.**

Park lands cannot be properly managed in isolation from the surrounding landscapes and communities of interest. Close cooperation with adjacent landowners, government agencies, Aboriginal people, conservation agencies and the public is required.

9. **Multi-disciplinary information will be compiled and considered in management decisions.**

Information (scientific, traditional and local knowledge) is vital to conservation planning and management. Information can help identify and assess the feature, avoid adverse impacts, support the development of protection and treatment strategies and monitoring. Information gathering will be undertaken with the participation and review of practitioners and professionals in all relevant disciplines/areas.

10. **Share knowledge of ecosystem-based management and conservation stewardship.**

Ecosystem-based management, and particularly the conservation stewardship message, is the foundation for improved public understanding of the environment and our heritage. Park lands will continue to articulate SERM's role and commitment to conservation stewardship and communicate this to the public through conservation management, education and interpretive programs.

11. **EcoRegions are responsible to define each park's conservation management priorities within the context of EcoRegional planning activities.**

In adopting the ecosystem-based management approach, SERM adopted a decentralized delivery model. Each EcoRegion has different management priorities reflecting the resource base, land use history and threats. Management planning and priority setting for individual park lands is an EcoRegion responsibility. The Conservation Action Plan provides the provincial policy framework, program objectives and priorities for the natural and cultural resources of park lands.

Section Two - Contextual Background

The Conservation Action Plan was undertaken within the context of a number of related initiatives at the international, national, provincial and departmental level. These various initiatives are summarized in the following sections.

2.1 Global

UNESCO Convention on Cultural and Heritage Features, 1972

In 1972, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) drew up a convention that called on all signatories to protect, conserve, present and ensure for future generations cultural heritage resources. This was the first formalized recognition of the importance of cultural heritage values at the international level.

World Conservation Strategy, 1980

The *World Conservation Strategy* (International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1980) represented the beginning of international conservation programs. The objective of the strategy was to encourage governments at all levels to maintain ecological processes, preserve genetic diversity and ensure the sustainable use of species and ecosystems.

World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987
Our Common Future

Several years following the World Conservation Strategy, a review of the state of the world's environment indicated that further measures were needed to address the deterioration of the environment, including the increasing loss of biodiversity. In 1987 The World Commission on Environment and Development released *Our Common Future* (the Brundtland Report) that further stressed the need for ecologically and economically sustainable development and reaffirmed the importance of protected areas for conserving biodiversity.

U.N. Convention on Biodiversity Strategy, 1992

The Convention represented the first comprehensive agreement to protect and conserve the Earth's biological resources. It recognized that the conservation of biological diversity requires the development of national strategies and action plans and the development of improved mechanisms for information collection and management. In 1992 Canada became the first industrialized country to sign the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity* (at the Earth Summit).

2.2 National Initiatives

Federal Legislation

Existing and pending federal legislation that has implications for park land management include: fisheries habitat under the Department of Fisheries and Oceans; protection of navigable waters under the Navigable Waters Act; and the Species at Risk Act proposed by Environment Canada.

Tri-Council of Ministers Commitment to a Network of Protected Areas, 1992

In 1992, the Canadian Parks Ministers' Council, the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment and Wildlife Ministers' Council of Canada made a commitment to "complete Canada's networks for protected areas representative of Canada's land-based natural regions by the year 2000 and accelerate the protection of areas representative of Canada's marine natural regions." Saskatchewan has made significant progress towards completing its network through the implementation of the park system plan and more recently the Representatives Areas Network (RAN). The Conservation Action Plan is intended to deal with the management of these designated park lands and to ensure that the natural and cultural integrity is maintained for future generations.

Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, 1995

The *Canadian Biodiversity Strategy* (Environment Canada 1995) was Canada's response to the international *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity*. The strategy provides direction for conservation and sustainable use of the environment through an ecological management approach. It emphasizes that the responsibility must be shared among provincial, territorial and federal governments, stakeholders and the public. The establishment and management of protected areas is recognized as an essential part of this process.

Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1997

The 1997 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples provided direction on the use and presentation of sites and objects that are sacred or of special significance to Aboriginal communities.

2.3 Canadian Jurisdictional Initiatives

British Columbia Parks Conservation Management Program[5] 1998

British Columbia Parks has initiated a three-part Conservation Management Program.

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[5]http://www.elp.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/protect/cpp_p1/preface.htm

Part 1 provides conservation program policy statements that are intended for staff who manage British Columbia's park[1] and ecological reserve system and for the information of other agencies and the public. This document is relatively static, in that the policies reflect long-term management direction which supports British Columbia Parks' contribution to global conservation efforts.

Part 2 and Part 3 are being developed.

Part 2 will contain strategic direction that will help British Columbia Parks to face the challenge of effectively managing and protecting the natural and cultural values found in British Columbia's protected area system. It will enable British Columbia Parks to set priorities for conservation management within the management cycle of the agency, including the annual operating plan.

Part 3 will outline procedural guidelines for managers responsible for the task of operating the park and ecological reserve system. It is a dynamic document, which will contain contemporary conservation management methods and techniques consistent with approved policies. Part 3 will be updated frequently, as new knowledge, approaches, and advanced technology enable British Columbia Parks' managers to adapt their management strategies to ensure the protection of natural and cultural values.

Initially, Saskatchewan borrowed heavily from the approach and Part 1 material produced by British Columbia in the development of its Conservation Action Plan. However, the Conservation Action Plan has been revised several times to better address the Saskatchewan situation.

***Panel on Ecological Integrity of Canada's National Parks,*[6] 2000**

This panel, which has issued a two-volume report, "found that the ecological integrity of virtually all of Canada's 39 national parks is threatened from a variety of internal and external sources." "It confirms that the ecological stresses identified in Parks Canada's 1994 and 1997 State of the Parks reports and by the 1996 Banff-Bow Valley Task Force affect nearly all of Canada's national parks. The report warns that pressures from overly-intensive development, both inside and outside parks, has driven some wildlife and plant species to the brink of extinction.".

In response to the report, The Minister of Canadian Heritage announced an action plan that highlights four major themes:

1. Making ecological integrity central in legislation and policy
2. Building partnerships
3. Planning for ecological integrity
4. Renewing Parks Canada to better support the ecological integrity mandate

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[6]http://parkscanada.pch.gc.ca/Library/NewsReleases/english/nr78_e.htm

The findings of the panel and ministerial response are consistent with the direction of Saskatchewan's Conservation Action Plan.

2.4 Saskatchewan Initiatives

Legislation

Responsibility for archaeological and paleontological resources falls under *The Heritage Property Act* (1980), which is administered by the Department of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing (MACH); Energy and Mines oversees mineral resources under *The Crown Mineral Act*. Water use and management is subject to the provisions of *The Water Corporation Act*.

Heritage Resource System Planning Framework (Draft), 1989

This draft framework was completed in 1989. It is a planning tool for identifying and prioritizing gaps in the provincial system of heritage resources. While it has yet to be finalized it provides a clear process in evaluating sites and indicating gaps in the system.

Saskatchewan's Environmental Agenda, 1994

The province of Saskatchewan adopted its current public policy related to the environment in 1994. *Saskatchewan's Environmental Agenda - Securing a Sustainable Future* was intended to compliment other major government policy initiatives at the time, including the Balance Budget Plan, Partnership for Renewal and the Wellness Model.

There are five goals and associated actions outlined in the Environmental Agenda designed "to achieve a sustainable environmental future for Saskatchewan:"

1. Protect primary resources of air, water and soil.
2. Preserve biological diversity and ensure the sustainable use of renewable resources and ecosystems.
3. Use non-renewable resources wisely.
4. Meet our national and global responsibilities.
5. Develop a sustainable society.

The second goal dealing with biological diversity recommended the development of a protected areas strategy. A portion of this work was intended to establish provincial goals and objectives for land protection and develop a plan of action to meet these goals. The Conservation Action Plan contributes to the completion of this action.

A New Vision for Saskatchewan's Heritage: Interim Heritage Council Report, 1999

Saskatchewan MACH has produced several documents on the future of heritage, including the 1999 Interim Heritage Council Report, which recognizes the need to ensure the protection and conservation of the province's cultural heritage. The cultural resources in the protected areas are viewed as playing an important, albeit site-specific, role in the provincial picture.

Saskatchewan Biodiversity Action Plan, 2001

To monitor progress within the province and to coordinate a government-wide response to the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy, the province has embarked on the preparation of a biodiversity action plan. *The Saskatchewan Biodiversity Action Plan* will act as a framework for coordinating current and future biodiversity conservation initiatives. The plan will recommend the completion of the RAN program and management of all protected areas, particularly those that serve as benchmarks for environmental monitoring.

2.5 SERM Initiatives

Legislation

The responsibility for conservation management on park lands, other than water and mineral resources, rests predominantly within SERM under *The Parks Act* (1986), *The Forest Act*, *The Fisheries Act*, *The Provincial Lands Act*, and *The Wildlife Act*.

The Parks Act and Regulations provide the authority to control land use, including whether or not a particular activity may occur and also under what conditions the activity may be allowed.

Recent amendments to *The Wildlife Act* include a broadened definition of wildlife, referring to all native flora and fauna, as well as a section on species at risk. This amendment provides province-wide protection for all native wild species that are listed in the act as extirpated, endangered, threatened or vulnerable.

Park Land Zoning Policy, 1988

The Park Land Zoning Policy established a system to provide for various levels of protection and use within specific parks. Zoning is based on intrinsic characteristics of the area and the various kinds of uses and levels of development that the land could support in relation to the park's classification. These zones include a *protection zone,* which restricts use to protect rare, significant, endangered, special and/or unique species and natural or cultural resources; a *wilderness zone,* where only limited wilderness-type recreational use can occur; a *natural zone*, where recreation is compatible with the natural landscape; an *historic zone,* which protects and interprets resources; a *development zone,* where visitor services and moderate to intensive recreational opportunities can be provided; an *access zone,* for public and utility corridors within

and through the park; and a *resource management zone,* to accommodate non-conforming, pre-existing resource extraction. The zoning policy has been used to zone all parks with completed park management strategies.

Policy on Management of Saskatchewan Park Lands, 1990

The *Management of Saskatchewan Park Lands* document was the first public document that articulated the management approach to protect park lands. Renewable resource use may only be used as a management tool, if it does not compromise the natural and cultural integrity of protected areas. Non-renewable resource extraction, such as oil and gas and mineral extraction, are not allowed, although existing tenures for non-renewable resource extraction will be honored (grandfathered) until they can be phased out.

Provincial Park System Plan, 1990

As a step towards fulfilling the department's mandate, the *Provincial Parks System Plan* was adopted by the province in 1990. The plan proposed an expansion of the protected areas system, calling for more complete representation of all of Saskatchewan's natural regions for the purposes of protection and recreation.

Representative Areas Network, 1996

Following recommendations in the *Provincial Parks System Plan*, *Saskatchewan's Environmental Agenda* and commitment to the *Canadian Biodiversity Strategy*, the *Representative Areas Network Action Plan* was released in 1996. Creation of the network is intended to ensure the maintenance of ecosystem, species and genetic diversity, and the processes that shaped them.

In its completed form the RAN will contain viable representation of each ecoregion of the province. Many of these areas will be designated park lands or ecological reserves. Ideally, the network will protect a system of large core areas surrounded by buffer zones and linked by protected corridors, where possible. Smaller refuges containing unique or outstanding cultural, botanical, zoological and geological phenomena, and rare and endangered species will be established in intensively managed areas, if necessary. The network will also provide excellent sites for research and education.

Saskatchewan Provincial Parks: Directions for the 21st Century, 1997

Following extensive pubic consultation in 1996, SERM released the report *Saskatchewan Provincial Parks: Directions for the 21st Century,* which provides the overarching vision, values, principles and strategic directions to lead the provincial park system into the 21st Century. This report indicated that natural and cultural resource protection was a critical function and priority of provincial parks, that resource protection was to be enhanced, that park lands would be models

of managing for ecological integrity, and that a strategy for protecting natural and cultural resources was to be completed.

Ecosystem-based Management - Plan of Action, 1999

Ecosystem-based management has been adopted as the approach by SERM in all its management activities. It has the following principles:

- *It focuses on the long-term view* - ecosystems must be sustained for the long-term well-being of all life.
- *It concentrates on ecosystem health and integrity* - work within the ecological potential of sites and landscapes to ensure that ecosystems can renew themselves to the greatest degree possible.
- *It makes decisions based on science-based and traditional knowledge and human values* - use the best available scientific and traditional knowledge as a foundation for decision-making. Ecological goals must be integrated with economic and social goals.
- *It involves those who will be affected by decisions, or who have an interest in the outcome* - work together with citizens, landowners, local governments, Aboriginal communities, interest groups, businesses, industry and other agencies to identify problems and opportunities and find common solutions.
- *It uses adaptive management by learning from experience* - adjust our thinking and actions as we gain better information.
- *It looks at the big picture* - treat air, water, land and living things as interconnected parts of an ecosystem. Think about the effects of proposed actions at several geographic scales and through time.

Since SERM is totally responsible for protection, management, development and use of park lands, this provides a unique opportunity for SERM to demonstrate how the ecosystem-based management approach can be applied to all aspects of managing for cultural and natural integrity. Park lands could become models of ecosystem management.

Fish and Wildlife Framework Interim Policy, 2000

SERM is currently crafting fish and wildlife policy to guide program design and implementation well past the year 2000. Within this context, the *Fish and Wildlife Policy Framework* represents the senior policy foundation which establishes the basic direction and intention for all fish and wildlife program and policy development. Six key principles to this framework are:

1. focus on the long-term view;
2. concentrate on ecosystem health and integrity;
3. make decisions based on science, Aboriginal traditional knowledge, local knowledge and human values;
4. involve those who will be affected by decisions, or who have an interest in the outcome;
5. use adaptive management by learning from experience;
6. and look at the big picture.

Provincial Parks Resource Management and Recreational Activities Guidelines, 2000

The *Policy on Management of Saskatchewan Park Lands, 1990* established general resource management policies. More specific policies/guidelines have been developed to elaborate on specific issues within the general policies. Many of these guidelines were in letter or memo format. To make these guidelines more accessible and readable, they, along with some recreational use guidelines, were revised in keeping with ecosystem management principles and early drafts of the Conservation Action Plan and/or re-formatted into a more "user friendly" format.

Section Three - Status of Conservation

Since their inception in 1931, Saskatchewan's provincial parks have been dedicated to the provision of outdoor recreation and the protection of natural and cultural resources. The management emphasis has shifted over the years between recreation and preservation, often as a reflection of economic pressures or resource use.

In 1986 *The Parks Act* declared that preservation of natural and cultural resources as well as education, recreation and social and economic benefits were important aspects of the parks' mandate. In 1996, the Parks Tomorrow project resulted in a commitment to enhance protection for natural and cultural resources. This is consistent with ecosystem-based management, which recognizes the inextricable link between humans and landscape.

With a new emphasis on protection and ecosystem-based management comes the need to rethink park management direction. To date, protection activities have largely occurred on a site-by-site, issue-by-issue basis, usually in response to deterioration, destruction or disease. The most notable exception was the vegetation management program supported by the Federal/Provincial Partnership Agreement in Forestry (PAIF) in the mid-1980s. The PAIF program addressed some of the vegetation needs at Cypress Hills, Moose Mountain and Greenwater Lake provincial parks.

For a number of reasons, natural and cultural resources within Saskatchewan's park lands have continued to deteriorate. A more proactive, holistic approach is proposed to meet the new goals of cultural and natural resource protection.

Management of cultural and natural resources has two major objectives. The first priority is to protect and preserve the resources and natural processes, and the second is to present them to the public for education or enjoyment in a manner that does not compromise the integrity of the resource. Despite some very effective individual projects, resource management in Saskatchewan's park system is not currently able to fulfill the above management objectives.

In 1996 one of the department groups supporting the Parks Tomorrow project (Cultural and Ecological Resource Management Task Group) developed a comprehensive list of management activities employed in managing and protecting resources. With some modifications the same activities were used in a report that summarizes the current status of feature management on provincial park lands. Table 1 provides a definition of each activity and a summary of the status.

The following are comments on the management activities as listed in Table 1.

- The most noticeable area of concern was in the activities of inventory, research, planning and monitoring, the cornerstones of ecosystem-based management. Currently there are very few resource inventories and most are dated. Research has been focused on specific problems rather than ecosystems. Most of the park plans are dated and do not reflect a

fully integrated approach. Monitoring of management activities is happening on a limited basis.

- Guidelines are required on how to collect, care for and manage the historic natural information and collections that are held in trust for future generations. There is no central library, filing system or Intranet site to store all the reports that are produced, by and for, SERM.

- The partnerships approach has unrealized potential. Although successful examples exist, a policy and guidelines for partnerships is required. SERM should actively seek partnerships with individuals and organizations interested in supporting parks.

- Policy and guidelines is an activity area that has seen an increased amount of work in the past few years. After several years of development, natural resource management policies and guidelines have been established. Additional policy work is still required for cultural resources and recreation management.

- One area that has variable attention and success is cooperative land use with adjacent landowners. One of the most successful is the work of the Park Advisory Committee for Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park.

- Communication activities have increased in the last few years. Public information and interpretive programming in individual parks is closely linked to the management message of the park. The focus has been to improve the quality and presentation of information to the public.

- Efforts in the enforcement and regulatory areas, i.e., resource use authorization, enforcement of legislation, compliance with leases, were deemed to be at an acceptable level given the amount of current activity.

Table 1: Definition of Management Activities and Summary of Current Status

Activity	Definition	Natural Feature	Cultural Feature
Inventory and Analysis	- Collecting data on values present in each park, where they occur, in what quantity, and in what condition they currently exist. Interpreting the meaning of data both numerically and logically and identifying areas where information is lacking.	- 50% wilderness and natural environment parks have natural resource inventories	- All historic parks with collections have artifact inventories
Research	- Involves issue research (i.e., literature review) collecting and acquiring traditional knowledge and applied research (i.e., on-site experimentation) to address how and why natural and cultural values should be managed - Involves both internal and external research	- Recently it is mainly external agency projects, i.e., U of R, DU - No sharing of information gained	- Currently 2 Metis research projects at Cypress Hills and Chimney Coulee - 2 archaeological excavations at Cannington Manor and one at Holy Trinity Anglican Church at Stanley Mission - Information gained shared primarily in academic circles
Artifact and Information Management	- Database design, data entry and retrieval, data manipulation, data management, cataloguing, display and storage of artifacts and collections	- Currently, specimen collection are limited and acquired for the education program - No guidelines on collecting or use	- Extensive original collection at 1 historic park, large reproduction collection at 2 historic parks, numerous items on loan at 1 historic park. - Dated policies and guidelines to govern use, acquisition, care and management
Planning	- The development of management direction based on research and consultation that addresses issues at both the system-wide and park-specific levels	- Manual filing system with each unit, branch or region independent of others	- Same as natural resources
Preservation and Restoration	- Preservation - protecting existing resources, artifacts or processes from deterioration - Restoration - returning resources, artifacts or processes to a state closer to their supposed original state or a state of greater integrity that they are at currently.	- Since the creation of the resource protection capital fund in 1997, over $256,000 has been spent on projects to control exotics, complete vegetation plans, do control burns, revegetate parks, undertake research	- Over $44,000 has been spent on cultural issues since 1997 when the resource protection fund was established. Projects include building upgrades, artifact storage improvements and repatriation of stone effigies

Activity	Definition	Natural Feature	Cultural Feature
Monitoring	- Following up data collection to assess results of specific management strategies (e.g., aspen regeneration after a prescribed burn) and on-going baseline data collection	- Some impact monitoring of vegetation regeneration (burns) in parks - Informal monitoring by staff in the field; however, all information is anecdotal	- Limited to specific issues, i.e. building condition, artifacts on display
Communication	- Information - information on what natural and cultural values the park contains - Education - information on the status and management of park values - Presentation/interpretation - on-site communication including the importance of natural and cultural values and their relationship to people - Training - specific programs or opportunities for staff to acquire knowledge and expertise.	- Printed information is available in 80% of natural environment parks, 50% of wilderness parks and 40% of recreation parks. Most are directly related to a specific trail. - Interpretive signs or trails are available in 80% of the natural environment parks and 60% of the recreation parks. - Interpretive displays are available in 70% of the natural environment parks and 40% of the recreation parks. Many displays are 20 + years old; only 3 displays have been redone in the last 6 years and 2 more are in the planning stage	- All historic parks, except 1 have printed information and interpretive signs on site. - Only 1 historic site has printed information and interpretive signs on site. - No natural environment or recreation park has printed information on cultural resources. - One wilderness park includes cultural information in a brochure. - Interpretive displays are available in the 4 staffed historic parks. - Cultural information is available in all of the park visitor centre displays.
Cooperative Land Use	- Consulting, involving and educating adjacent landowners with respect to natural and cultural issues management on park lands and adjacent private or leased lands	- Most parks have park advisory groups. - Most parks have been, or are, involved in this to some extent.	- Just at the beginning stages, particularly with developing agreements with First Nations
Partnerships	- Internal (department) and external (tourism, conservation organizations, sports clubs, other organizations with similar or complementary interests) partnerships that share the cost or expertise needed to protect natural and cultural values	- Agreements in the past (PAIF); none currently	- Partnerships are for interpretation not protection
Policy and Guidelines	- Policy (describing what and why) and guidelines (describing how) in reference to planning, decision-making and day-to-day management functions	- Resource guidelines have just been updated	- Limited cultural policies and guidelines are unchanged since mid-1980s. Need major revisions and new ones developed

Activity	Definition	Natural Feature	Cultural Feature
Legislation and Regulations	- Establishing in law, standards, process, fees, etc., for managing protected area values	- At best, only minor adjustments to regulations	- *The Heritage Property Act* is being considered for a legislative review, which may lead to changes
Enforcement of Legislation and Regulations	- Enforcement, by an officer, of protection laws using the appropriate measures (e.g., charges, fines, eviction, etc.)	- No reported issues/concerns	- No reported issues/concerns
Compliance with Leases and Permits	- Monitoring and encouragement, by field staff, of authorized resource users to adhere to the regulations, agreements, permits and leases governing legitimate resource use activities	- Very few problems reported	- Relies on the permitting requirements for archaeological excavation as outlined in *The Heritage Property Act*
Impact Assessments and Environmental Audits	- Analysis of the potential impacts of development, management actions and public use on the natural and cultural values on the site and the surrounding area	- Protocol has been developed and generally occurs prior to any development	- See natural resources
Public Safety Risk Management	- Managing natural and cultural issues so as to minimize or eliminate their threat to public safety	- Only done in terms of aging trees in the developed area	- Only done in terms of developed areas and associated with structures
Candidate Protected Area Assessment	- Establishing guidelines and conducting assessments for areas under consideration for designation as park lands, ecological reserves or other representative areas	- Currently not being done within the park's system designation	- No system developed for selecting sites

Section Four - Threats to Ecological and Cultural Integrity

People tend to think of park lands as places with pristine environments and resources. The reality is very different. A variety of forces, both natural and human, threaten park lands. They are affected by activities and practices occurring outside of their boundaries, as well as what is happening within. If maintaining the integrity of natural and cultural resources is a priority, then the many threats or stresses which impact park lands need to be managed.

4.1 Survey of Threats

In order to identify the known and/or perceived threats to park lands, staff within each EcoRegion were canvassed to provide information on individual provincial parks and a few of the more popular recreation sites. One of the main issues facing park managers is the lack of current and up-to-date resource inventory and analyses for both natural and cultural resources. Without this information, it is difficult to determine what might be threatening some of the resources. However, the survey was intended to reveal the presence of common threats to biodiversity and those which impact on cultural resources for individual park lands.

The survey form used for terrestrial and aquatic threats was developed by the Saskatchewan Research Council and used in their 1999 report to SERM on *Threats to Biodiversity in Saskatchewan*. The survey form for cultural integrity was modified from one used by Parks Canada in *The State of the Parks* (1997) report. The responses are summarized in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

4.2 Threats to Natural Resources

The most common perceived threats reported in over 50% of the surveyed park lands were:

Habitat Loss and Alteration

- shifts in ecoregions due to climatic change
- change in lake levels and river flows due to water diversion
- changes in grasslands due to fire suppression
- loss due to linear developments (roads, trails, utility corridors)
- loss due to urban/industrial/recreational development (most parks indicated it was recreational developments that were the major issue)
- disturbance of ecosystem due to recreation traffic

Habitat Fragmentation

- due to other linear developments (roads, trails, utility corridors)

Exotic Invasion

- invasion of upland vegetation by exotic plants

Pollution

- pollution due to sewage release

Overharvesting

- overharvesting of fish species

4.3 Threats to Cultural Resources

The sources of threats that affect cultural resource integrity fall into two categories: natural processes and human interaction. Cultural resources have physical attributes which are affected by natural processes. To appreciate their significance (either cultural, historic or scientific) cultural resources must be conveyed to the public, often through access to the feature that may negatively impact on the resource.

Cultural resources (e.g., Humphrey Hewlett House) are usually unique, either to the province or the park system. Therefore, conservation efforts must be directed to minimizing loss or degradation to these single resources. Once a cultural feature loses its integrity, it cannot be restored and still be considered authentic. Once archaeological artifacts are disturbed, it is impossible to recover any information that they may have conveyed while artifacts were in situ.

The areas of perceived concern to cultural integrity are:

Natural Aging of Buildings, Structures and Artifacts

- includes original buildings such as the church at Stanley Mission or the Chalet at Moose Mountain, to reconstructed buildings at Fort Carlton
- includes historic artifacts and specimen collections

Public Use Impacts

- particularly a concern regarding historic buildings and artifacts as well as parks with known archaeological resources

4.4 Summary

This cursory survey of the threats to natural and cultural integrity on park lands reveals the need for inventory information. It also demonstrates the range and diversity of threats throughout the park lands and the need for a more thorough assessment of individual park lands. There are some common threats that can be addressed through a province-wide management response. These include:

- climate change impacts on terrestrial and aquatic habitats
- change in forest and grassland communities from fire suppression

- exotic species invasion of terrestrial and aquatic habitats
- channelization and water diversion impact on aquatic habitats
- impact from recreation development;
- impact of linear developments on terrestrial habitats
- deterioration of historic buildings and artifacts

Table 2. Database of Threats to Terrestrial Biodiversity

POTENTIAL THREAT	NUMBER OF PARK LANDS REPORTING PRESENCE OF THREAT. Total Number of Park Lands is 25
HABITAT LOSS AND ALTERATION	
Shifts in ecoregions due to climatic change	18
Changes in forest age-class distribution due to timber harvesting	4 - Narrow Hills, Greenwater Lake, Meadow Lake, Cypress Hills
Habitat changes in clearcuts compared to burns	4 - as above
Changes in forest due to fire suppression	11
Loss of burn habitats due to fire salvage	4
Changes in grasslands due to fire suppression	14 - Rated High in Grasslands
Habitat loss due to clearing/breaking for agriculture	3
Changes in range condition and habitat due to livestock grazing	8 - Rated High in Grasslands
Damage to riparian vegetation by livestock grazing	5
Flooding of riparian ecosystems due to dam construction	7
Changes in riparian habitats downstream from dams	5 - Rated Medium in Lac La Ronge
Habitat loss due to road construction	10
Habitat loss due to other linear developments	13
Habitat loss due to urban/industrial/recreational development	21
Habitat loss due to coal mining	0
Disturbance of ecosystems due to recreation traffic	17
Disturbance to ecosystem due to military activities	2 - Meadow Lake, Clearwater River
Effect of habitat loss outside of Sask. On migratory species	2 - Good Spirit Lake, Cypress Hills
Habitat Fragmentation	
Fragmentation due to timber harvesting	2 - Narrow Hills, Greenwater Lake
Fragmentation due to clearing/breaking for agriculture	3 - Good Spirit Lake, Moose Mountain, Duck Mountain
Fragmentation due to road construction	10
Fragmentation due to other linear developments	13
EXOTIC INVASION	
Invasion of upland vegetation by exotic plants	21
Invasion of exotic birds	0
Invasion of exotic insects	3 - Blackstrap, Pike Lake, Battlefords
Invasion of exotic microbe pests	0
Predation by domestic cats and dogs	11
Dispersal of exotics due to clearing/breaking for agriculture	8 - Mainly on adjacent lands
Spread of disease from livestock operations and game farms	3 - Duck Mountain, Moose Mountain, Good Spirit Lake
Dispersal of exotics due to road construction	11
Dispersal of exotics due to other linear developments	8
POLLUTION	
Vegetation damage due to acid precipitation	4
Pollution due to oil/gas extraction	2 - Moose Mountain, Meadow Lake
Vegetation damage due to potash mines	0
Vegetation damage due to other industry	6
Air pollution due to greenhouse gases	3
Poisoning of non-target wildlife due to pesticide use	6
Loss of migratory birds due to pesticide use outside of Sask.	1 - Greenwater Lake
OVERHARVESTING	
Overharvesting of big game	7
Overharvesting of medicinal and other plants	5
LOSS OF GENETIC DIVERSITY	
Loss of diversity in planted tree seedlings	5
Loss of diversity in crop plants	0
Threats of genetically engineered crops	0

Table 3. Database of Threats to Aquatic Biodiversity

POTENTIAL THREAT	NUMBER OF PARK LANDS REPORTING PRESENCE OF THREAT Total Number of Park Lands Reporting is 25
HABITAT LOSS AND ALTERATION	
Shifts in ecoregions due to climatic change	24 - Exception Regina Beach
Drainage of wetlands	2 - Moose Mountain, Buffalo Pound
Downstream effects of drainage of wetlands	2 - Moose Mountain, Blackstrap
Change in aquatic habitats due to channelization	10
Change from stream to reservoir due to dam construction	4 - Buffalo Pound, Rowan's Ravine, Cypress Hills, Lac La Ronge
Changes in aquatic habitats downstream from dams	8
Downstream effects of irrigation	4
Change in lake levels and river flows due to water diversion	14
Disturbance of ecosystems due to recreation traffic	20
HABITAT FRAGMENTATION	
Barriers to dispersal due to dam construction	4
Barriers to dispersal due to road construction	9
EXOTIC INVASION	
Invasion of wetlands by exotic plants	5
Invasion of exotic microbe pests	0
Invasion of exotic fish and molluscs	10
Dispersal of exotics due to water diversion	2
POLLUTION	
Aquatic effects of acid precipitation	5
Siltation/eutrophication due to clearing/breaking for agriculture	9
Poisoning of non-target wildlife due to pesticide use	7
Siltation/eutrophication due to livestock grazing	7
Siltation due to roads	9
Pollution due to oil/gas extraction	1
Water pollution due to metals mining	2
Water pollution due to other industry	3
Pollution due to sewage release	17
Water pollution due to landfills	5
OVERHARVESTING	
Overharvesting of fish species	16

Table 4. Database of Threats to Cultural Integrity

POTENTIAL THREAT	NUMBER OF PARK LANDS REPORTING PRESENCE OF THREAT Total number of Park Lands Reporting is 27
Natural Processes	
Resource condition - building, structures	12- Historic reporting Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Ft. Pitt, Fort Carlton, Last Mountain House, Cannington Manor, Steele Narrows
Resource condition - landscapes	2 - Fort Pitt, St. Victor
Resource condition - artifacts	11 - 7 Historic parks & other parks with large specimen collections
Fire	6 - Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Cannington Manor, Fort Carlton, Cypress Hills, Buffalo Pound, SK Landing
Infestation - vegetation	9 - Steele Narrows, Fort Carlton, St Victor, Last Mountain House
Infestation - pests	7- Cannington Manor, Fort Carlton, Last Mountain House
Lack of environmental controls - buildings	4 - Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Cannington Manor, Fort Carlton, Wood Mountain Post
Water infiltration	7 - St Victor, Cannington Manor, Cumberland, Last Mountain House
Erosion	4 - Hickson-Maribelli Lakes, Cannington Manor, Fort Carlton, St. Victor
Human Interaction	
Public use impacts	13 - Stanley Mission, Hickson-Maribellli Lakes, Steele Narreows, Cannington Manor, Fort Carlton, Touchwood, Cumberland, St. Victor, Last Mountain House
Development on site	5 - Fort Carlton
Developments off site	8 - Cannington Manor, Fort Carlton, Cumberland House, Wood Mountain Post, Last Mountain House
Lack of security	9 - Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Cannington Manor, Fort Carlton, Cumberland House, Wood Mountain Post, Last Mountain House
Lack of Information	
Lack of Information concerning the significance/value management requirements of the resource.	All Parks
Lack of inventory information	All Parks

Section Five - Conservation Policies

The following section describes the scope, rationale and policy direction for managing natural and cultural resources, resource use and administration. It is based on the premise that Saskatchewan's park lands system will be managed to protect and maintain areas unique or representative of the province's natural and cultural diversity and to provide compatible interpretive, recreation and tourism opportunities

5.1 Natural Resources

The management and protection of flora, fauna and fish in Saskatchewan's park lands extends to all terrestrial and aquatic plants, vertebrates and invertebrates. Their management is a shared responsibility among various agencies. The following policies, which support conservation of natural resources, are intended to specifically complement those policies under the purview of Fish and Wildlife and Forest Ecosystem branches.

Protect Biological Diversity

- Saskatchewan's park lands will be managed to maintain natural biodiversity and their habitats within complete and functioning ecosystems.

Maintain Ecological Processes

- Park lands will be managed to maintain natural ecosystem functions, recognizing the long-term influence of natural ecosystem processes such as weather, fire, floods, predation, succession, drought, insects, age and disease.

- Where a natural process threatens the existence of a species or community that has been identified for conservation, or poses a significant risk to park users and/or adjacent landowners, it may be curtailed.

Protect Critical Landscape Resources

- Landscape features which play a critical role in providing the structural foundation for biotic systems and cultural values will be protected by minimizing human impact and allowing natural processes to continue uninterrupted.

Priority to Species and Habitats at Risk

- Those species and habitats at greatest risk will receive priority management attention.

Maintain Vegetation of Historic Value

- Park lands which include human-altered (including non-native species) vegetation cover may be managed to maintain the feature if it is deemed to have historic value and does not pose a threat to the surrounding ecosystem. This may include the arrest of vegetation succession or fire suppression.

Flora, Fauna and Fish Population Managed for Recreation

- Population management for the purposes of restoring predator-prey relationships or increasing populations for recreation purposes is permitted. All population management programs are to be monitored and evaluated for effectiveness. Artificial enhancement of native flora, fauna and fish populations may be permitted for recreation purposes.

Species Re-introduction

- Native plant and animal species, if extirpated from park lands, may be re-introduced when scientific research indicates that the original extirpation was human-caused, when re-introduction is considered feasible, and when no significant negative ecological impacts are expected.

Minimizing Exotic Species Invasions

- The prevention and active management of exotic species invasions, including noxious weeds, will be considered a priority where a substantial impact on the ecosystem is evident or likely, where successful control can reasonably be expected, and where ecosystem health and biodiversity are not adversely affected by the control measures.

Exotic Species

- Exotic species may be introduced to establish a predator-prey relationship with another exotic or to provide a recreation opportunity that has been traditional to a park land area.

- No control measure will be undertaken on park lands without an adequate problem analysis (including a baseline inventory of species in the treatment area) and a monitoring program to evaluate the significance of exotic species to that particular area and the effectiveness of any control actions.

- Terrestrial and aquatic weeds, as defined by *The Noxious Weeds Act, 1984*, will be removed from park lands in accordance with that act.

Wildfire Management

- Action will be directed by each park land's management plan.
- If no fire management direction exists, suppression measures will be applied recognizing the values at risk. Natural disturbances are generally considered acceptable and commercial forest values are not a priority.
- Generally, ignition source (human or lightning) will not be considered in determining a management response.

Prescribed Burning

- Deliberate burning may be used as a management tool to accomplish the park's vegetation management objectives and where fire suppression has effectively removed natural fire occurrence from the ecosystem. It may also be used to reduce fuel accumulations that have become a fire hazard (e.g., blowdowns).

Insect and Disease Management

- Prior to any control actions, insect and disease outbreaks will be assessed relative to their impact on ecosystems within and adjacent to protected areas. Control actions will only be undertaken if:
  - the pest or disease is non-native;
  - recreation values and public safety are severely threatened within core development zones;
  - environmental loss is expected to be detrimental to the ecosystem as a result of previous, human-caused disturbance such as logging;
  - adjacent areas will be negatively impacted through significant loss of livelihood or threat to public safety; or
  - a cultural artifact, site or building is at risk.
- Biological or mechanical control methods are to be used, where possible.

5.2 Cultural Resources

Cultural resources are held in trust for present and future generations to enjoy, understand and study. Balancing use and presentation with protection of the cultural resources is the one of the challenges of conservation management. A second challenge is to integrate cultural resource management with natural resource management. An integrative approach builds on the fundamental relationships among physical, biological and social systems, and it views human beings as part of the natural world and the natural world as the basis for human activity.

The following policies are proposed to support conservation of cultural resources.

Maintain Human-Altered Landscapes of Significance

- Human-altered landscapes identified as having provincially significant cultural importance will be managed to perpetuate the essential elements of the landscape.

Assess Cultural ResourcesValue

- The management of cultural resources requires an initial inventory and assessment of their value and significance. Value is to be assigned by considering the following criteria:
  - Original vs. reconstructed feature;
  - Significance of the feature to the history of the province and its peoples: is it unique or common? How many periods of history has it experienced?
  - Potential of the feature to contribute to scientific or technological knowledge;
  - The feature's ability to increase public understanding;
  - Importance to more than one cultural group; and
  - Quality or level of historic integrity of the feature.

Record and Maintain Documentation and Confidentiality

- Records will be maintained for future generations and include related documentation, research information, records of decisions and actions taken.

- When faced with loss, either due to human or natural forces, and when long-term stabilization or salvage is not possible, the cultural feature will be recorded and documented to preserve a public record.

- Information revealing the location of sensitive cultural resources will not be made public if there is a significant risk that additional use of visitation could pose a threat to the feature (i.e., burial sites).

Appropriate Management of Cultural Resources

- Conservation maintenance programs that reduce wear and deterioration without altering performance, integrity or appearance will be a priority. Programs will advance along a progression from the least intervention (i.e., maintenance) to greatest (i.e., restoration). In determining the most appropriate action the following factors will be considered:
  - historic value and integrity of the feature;
  - the physical condition and context of the feature;
  - the impact of the action on the feature;
  - available documentation and information; and
  - opportunities for presentation and appropriate uses.

- Reconstructions are permitted only if they are essential for public understanding of the cultural associations within a park, the structures can be built at full scale on the original site, and significant archaeological resources will be preserved in situ or their research values will be realized through data recovery.

- Demolishing an historic structure is permitted only when all alternatives have been determined infeasible in the planning process, necessary for public safety and after public consultation

- The integrity of cultural resources should not be negatively impacted by efforts to conserve, enhance or protect them.

Priority for Aboriginal Involvement

- Aboriginal peoples will be consulted on matters affecting Aboriginal resources, sites and resources, including the development of management actions.

Information, Presentation and Use

- Information to enhance the knowledge and appreciation of the richness and diversity of Saskatchewan's cultural resources will be available to the public through a variety of methods, providing the feature will not be at jeopardy.

- Interpretation of resources should be accurate, current and relevant to park themes. It should encompass and acknowledge a variety of viewpoints and beliefs.

- Public access to a cultural resource will be restricted if SERM and heritage groups deem the feature to be of a special or sensitive nature. Information about the feature will be available to the public, when appropriate.

- Archaeological artifacts may be removed for scientific research or public interpretation and enjoyment, subject to approval from the park manager and in accordance to legislation.

- An historic structure may be used so long as the use does not destroy historic material, resources and spatial relationships that characterize the historic structure.

- Artifacts may be used in exhibits, interpretive and educational programs, motion pictures and photography, subject to preservation and protection standards.

5.3 Resource Use - Renewable, Non-renewable and Recreation Activities

The primary means for conserving natural and cultural resources is to manage human use and activities. Policy direction as to what uses and activities are acceptable flow from the legislated mandate of park lands (conservation/protection, education and recreation). Activities that are not

compatible with this mandate are not permitted within park lands. Activities that are compatible with the mandate of park lands are permitted, subject to classification/zoning restrictions, and conditions designed to minimize impacts on the resource base. Table 5 lists a variety of activities, including non-renewable and renewable resource use and recreation, and notes whether the use is permitted (subject to area restrictions and conditions) or is not permitted.

It should be noted that some activities that are not permitted do currently occur on park land. These non-conforming uses either pre-dated the designation of the park land or *The Parks Act, 1996* and policy developed pursuant to the Act. The intent is to phase out non-conforming uses over time, either through attrition or mutual agreement. Unilateral action by the government is the least preferred option, but may be invoked where no agreement is possible and there is a major threat to the natural or cultural resources.

Conservation Priority vs. Use

- Conservation programs have precedence over recreational or consumptive benefits.

Respect Aboriginal Resource Use and Mutually Establish Guidelines

- Aboriginal rights to traditional resource use will be respected. Responsible levels of use and the type of authorizations required will be mutually determined to achieve conservation objectives, ensure the sustainability of the resource and ensure public safety.

Non-renewable Resource Use Prohibited

- Non-renewable resource use (mineral extraction) is prohibited within all park lands, except where absolutely required for park land management purposes (e.g., gravel).

Renewable Resource Use

- Renewable resource use (e.g., haying, grazing) is permitted for park management purposes, provided conservation objectives of the park land area are not compromised and it occurs in a manner that sustains the environment.

Table 5 - Park Land Activity Policies (Current and Proposed)

Not Permitted : refers to uses not compatible with the intent of park lands.
Permitted Use: refers to uses that are compatible with the intent of park lands. The activities may be restricted to certain areas, subject to park classification and zoning. Conditions, to minimize negative resource impacts will apply where necessary. A park management strategy will determine if an activity may occur and where.

Activity	Not Permitted	Permitted Use (Subject to area restrictions and conditions)	Comments
Non-renewable Resource Use			
Mineral Exploration and Development			A non-conforming use that occurs within the Mineral Exploration Zone of Lac La Ronge Provincial Park. The activity pre-dated the park designation. The activity is to be phased out.
Oil and Gas Exploration and Development			A non-conforming use that occurs within Moose Mtn. and Meadow Lake provincial parks and Bronson Forest Rec. Site. The activity pre-dated *The Parks Act 1996*. The activity is to be phased out.
Sand and Gravel Extraction			Permitted only where necessary for park development and maintenance purposes.
Renewable Resource Uses			
Gathering of Forest Products - Birch Bark. etc			
Trapping			
Forest Harvesting			Permitted only for park vegetation management purposes.
Own-use Firewood			
Hydroelectric Dev.			
Cultivation			
Utility Corridors			Permitted only where necessary for park development and maintenance purposes and/or no alternative routing is considered feasible.
Salvage Logging			
Commercial Fishing			A non-conforming use that occurs within Lac La Ronge and Meadow Lake provincial parks. The activity pre-dated *The Parks Act 1996*. So long as a sport fishery is available there is no intent to phase out this activity.
Fish Farming			
Haying			Current activity may have to be reduced in some areas to meet park vegetation management objectives (e.g., Meadow Lake Provincial Park)
Grazing			
Wild Rice Cultivation			A non-conforming activity based on an exotic species, which occurs within Lac La Ronge, Meadow Lake and Narrow Hills provincial parks. The activity pre-dated *The Parks Act 1996*. The activity is to be phased out.

Activity	Not Permitted	Permitted Use (Subject to area restrictions and conditions)	Comments
Recreation			
Licensed Sport Hunting		[redacted]	
Licensed Sport Angling		[redacted]	
Own-use Christmas Tree Cutting	[redacted]		
Backcountry Camping		[redacted]	
All-terrain Vehicles		[redacted]	
Snowmobiling		[redacted]	
Berry Picking		[redacted]	No authorization required
Walking/Hiking		[redacted]	
Horseback Riding		[redacted]	
Other			
Research - Scientific and Educational		[redacted]	

Recreation Use and Tourism Facilities

- Parks lands are to be managed for both conservation and compatible recreation. The extent to which recreation values are considered depends on the category of park lands (e.g., parks, recreation sites, protected areas) or in the case of provincial parks, the park classification.

- Recreation objectives are to be achieved by the entire provincial park system. All recreational uses or activities cannot or need not be accommodated in every or any individual park.

- Activities on park lands are to emphasize outdoor recreation experiences related to an area's natural and cultural resources. Development and services, when unavailable in areas adjacent to park lands, should facilitate public education and enjoyment within that context.

Section Six - Management Activity Policies

This section recommends policies according to the 17 management activities as listed in Table 1. These 17 activities together comprise the bulk of the work required for proactive conservation management.

6.1 Inventory and Analysis

The inventory of natural and cultural resources within Saskatchewan's park lands is essential to their effective management. Inventory and assessment is especially important for establishing conservation objectives; prioritizing programs according to risk; and making effective, knowledge-based decisions. Knowledge and awareness of natural and cultural resources and ecological processes is essential in the formulation of management and interpretive plans.

Currently there is no systematic approach to inventorying Saskatchewan's park lands, resulting in a scattering of resource inventories and incomplete inventories for moveable and non-moveable cultural resources.

Area Inventories and Analysis

- Standardized inventories and analyses of the presence, distribution, number, condition, value and significance of natural and cultural resources and artifacts should be available for each park land area and updated as required.

Special Feature Inventories

- Inventories should be conducted to determine the presence and abundance of exotic species, species and communities at risk, or species requiring special management.

6.2 Research

Research provides information for making decisions about how to manage natural and cultural resources. Research is a key element in the ecosystem-based management approach. Information is required to understand ecosystems and the relationship between their components. However, little is known about the functioning of ecosystems within Saskatchewan park lands. Historic, scientific research and traditional knowledge is required to understand the significance of cultural resources. We need to learn more about cultural resources, material history and theme research.

There are essentially two types of research; primary and secondary. Primary research consists of the collection and analysis of data in the field to address a specific question or original historic material produced at the time of the event. Secondary research consists of gathering relevant

information that already exists to address the similar questions.

SERM has limited ability to conduct primary research; yet park lands are attractive research sites for academia, federal agencies and volunteers. On the other hand, secondary research information can be gleaned from scientific literature, as well as traditional Aboriginal and local knowledge and staff experience.

Most research projects associated with natural resources have been conducted by outside agencies, primarily within natural environment parks. Much of the information is not readily available, nor has it been interpreted for management purposes. Cultural resource research has been mostly internal and has primarily focused on overall history of the area. Specific material history and theme research is required.

Research Information for Decision-making

- At a minimum, secondary research will be undertaken and communicated to those interested and involved before making any management decisions.

Identifying Research Priorities

- Research needs and objectives for park lands should be identified annually and communicated to potential researchers.

Primary Research for Park Lands

- Primary research by internal and external agencies (universities, Canadian Forest Service [CFS], Canadian Wildlife Service [CWS], etc.) and individuals will be encouraged and, possibly, supported where it is related to park land management objectives and does not jeopardize the integrity of cultural or natural resources.

- Collection of specimens and artifacts is generally inappropriate within park lands. However, it may be permitted if it results in information that provides for increased protection of the feature or scientific knowledge not otherwise available.

- All external research proposals that require extensive sampling or manipulation of any natural or cultural resources must be screened through the environmental and heritage review process.

- All results of research conducted on and about park lands are to be made available to SERM (park managers/resource managers) for consideration in conservation and management decisions.

6.3 Artifact and Information Management

Natural and cultural information needed by park and resource area managers and others must be available, accessible, manageable and comprehensible. However, information considered sensitive from a cultural or protection perspective requires restricted access privileges.

There is not, at present, a systematic, electronically accessible database that allows access to the available ecological data or artifact inventories. Reports and other documents are not catalogued in a searchable format, making them difficult to use.

Area Specific Reports

- All reports on specific park lands should be available to those responsible for park management.

Information Management

- An integrated, standardized and up-to-date database(s) should be developed to house inventory, research and monitoring data and tocatalogue artifact information and reports.

- SERM will work with other agencies, conservation organizations, landowners and universities to:
  - develop programs to collect, store, interpret and share data related to conservation and environmental monitoring;
  - collect information in areas adjacent to park lands where such information may influence park land values or conservation management activities; and
  - update collection policies and objectives for historic parks and natural environment parks.

Sensitive Information

- Information which is sensitive (e.g., rare species locations, respect for Aboriginal burial sites) will be kept confidential and not released in response to routine inquiries. Exceptions may be made only for conservation management, research or impact assessment purposes with the understanding that the information will not be further distributed.

6.4 Planning

Planning is required at a variety of levels. Provincially, system planning is required to meet a variety of objectives, including representation of natural and cultural resources. Natural regions not well represented in the park system were identified in the Park System Plan. The RAN program is currently selecting new areas targeted for the protection of natural values, some of which may be eventually designated as park lands. Only a small proportion of the historic and pre-historic themes and sub-themes are represented within historic parks, historic sites and

protected areas. The Conservation Action Plan also reflects a provincial plan to address the protection goal of park lands.

Regionally, effective management of park lands requires that individual areas be integrated within their surrounding landscapes and ecoregions.

Locally, each park land area requires various plans to ensure that the natural and cultural resources are protected and to integrate management with whatever uses might be allowed, including recreation. Park management strategies encompass all aspects of park management, whereas conservation plans (where comprehensive information is available) or strategies (limited information is available to set management direction) deal specifically with managing the natural and cultural resources only.

Systems Planning

- A system plan is required to ensure viable representation and linkages of the diverse natural and cultural resources and unique resources and landscapes. From a resource protection perspective, the system should include:
  - Areas representative of Saskatchewan's cultural and natural resources;
  - Small refuges within intensively managed areas; and
  - The protection of areas known to contain species, unique ecosystems and cultural resources at risk.

- Prior to any boundary/zoning changes/deletions to any park land an assessment is required to determine if any rare species, special ecological areas or significant cultural resources will be affected.

Conservation Action Planning (Provincial)

- There should be an up-to-date, provincial planning document that addresses conservation management policies and priorities for all park lands. This document is required to ensure that once park lands are designated, they are managed in such a way that they meet their legislated mandate.

Regional/EcoRegional Planning

- All department program/regional/EcoRegional planning efforts are to articulate management needs and a role for park lands. This will serve to integrate the park lands mandate with that of the surrounding landscape, EcoRegional operations and other provincial programs.

Park Area Management Strategies - Protection Mandate Emphasis

- The content of park management strategies and the planning process are be revised to

emphasize the protection mandate and the importance of cultural and natural resources and of maintaining ecological processes. This will include:

- involvement of expertise and interests from throughout the department and across government
- identification of site-specific natural and cultural conservation needs;
- prioritization of conservation management issues;
- research, inventory and monitoring strategies necessary to address the site-specific management needs;
- management planning for flora, fauna, fish and cultural resources;
- the creation of various zones within a park land area, which will allow for varying levels of protection and development; and
- integration with other plans that are developedm, such as fire plans and conservation plans.

Public Involvement in Planning

- All plans and strategies developed for park lands must include public consultation prior to being approved. This includes involvement of provincial park advisory committees and other local and provincial residents and interest groups.

6.5 Preservation and Restoration

Implementation of conservation plans and park management strategies usually involves activities referred to as either preservation and/or restoration. The pace at which implementation proceeds depends largely on available funding and staffing resources.

- Preservation and restoration will take place in a planned fashion, provided it does not threaten the area's long-term ecological and cultural integrity. Prior to any preservation or restoration work, plans and follow-up monitoring need to be addressed.

- Preservation will usually take precedence over restoration where funding does not allow for both.

- The Capital Budget and Fish and Wildlife Development Fund will be targeted for natural and cultural feature preservation and restoration.

6.6 Monitoring

Monitoring is an integral part of ecosystem-based management and is essential to the conservation of natural and cultural resources. Monitoring provides important feedback to ensure that actions achieve objectives (adaptive management). The range of park lands in Saskatchewan also offers a unique opportunity to participate in monitoring and assessing the ecological and cultural integrity of the province in general.

To date, no formal monitoring system has been established, and response monitoring is limited to a few prescribed burn and timber harvesting sites, and assessment of some cultural resources at risk. It is expected that the province will develop a comprehensive monitoring program to predict or detect, at regular intervals, changes in the present and future health of park land and, ultimately, other provincial ecosystems.

Ecosystem Health/Ecological Integrity Monitoring

- Changes in natural and cultural resources and their causes, either natural or human-induced disturbance, will be monitored.

- Park lands that serve as representative benchmarks/control sites, and their ecosystems at risk, will be identified and monitored.

- Park lands will be available for provincial ecosystem health monitoring.

Response Monitoring

- The results of management activity (preservation and restoration) and resource use will be monitored.

6.7 Communication and Interpretation

Internal and external communication is key to garnering support and ensuring efficient and appropriate management. An awareness and appreciation of the cultural and ecological values of park lands and associated issues will encourage a sense of stewardship and increase public support for conservation programs.

Many park lands have interpretative programs, trails, brochures and self-use signs, but these often lack information about natural and cultural resources, their significance or their protection.

Communication for Stewardship

- Information about natural and cultural resources, their presence, value locally and provincially, issues, management options, etc., needs to be communicated to staff and the general public to raise the level of awareness and assist in developing appropriate management actions.

Interpretation

- All interpretive programs, materials and facilities will focus on natural and cultural resources, their management and relationship to people. They are to be designed to mitigate any impact on the resource.

- Where appropriate, SERM will provide both off-site and on-site interpretation. Education and interpretation on park lands will be encouraged where there is no serious negative impact on the natural and cultural resources and it is a component of the park management strategy.

6.8 Cooperative Land Use

Park lands cannot be managed in isolation from surrounding lands and communities. Each impacts on the other. A special effort is required to maintain good communications/relationships with adjacent landowners and communities to explore opportunities for complementary management actions. Landowner support is critical to protect natural and cultural values and to sustain larger scale ecological processes. The more information we share, the more likely they will become park stewards.

- Develop management objectives with the involvement of adjacent landowners and/or communities.

- Establish structures and process to maintain communications with adjacent landowners, so that any situations may be dealt with effectively.

6.9 Public Involvement and Partnerships

Effective conservation of natural and cultural resources depends on a well-informed and involved public. Involvement of the public enhances the development of management direction and delivery of resource management programs.

Most of Saskatchewan's provincial parks have, or are planning to have, park advisory committees composed of local residents, stakeholders and the general public. Cooperative initiatives are being developed with adjacent landowners and Aboriginal groups.

Partnerships allow contributions from each party for mutual benefit. Partnerships with government, academic, business, public agencies and individuals will assist in achieving conservation goals for park lands by providing additional funding and specialized expertise. Coordination with other branches of SERM, Saskatchewan Conservation Data Centre, CWS, CFS, Nature Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation, Ducks Unlimited and MACH Heritage Branch will be promoted. Formal agreements with research facilities and universities will be encouraged, as well as more continuous and consistent liaison with the scientific community.

Past partnerships have supported a number of research projects and provided funding to begin developing park-specific management plans. There are currently no formal funding partnerships between parks and other agencies.

Provincial Park Advisory Committees

- Advisory committees should be established for all provincial parks to provide ongoing public representation and input into management. Each committee should strive for representation from both provincial and local interests.

- The provincial park advisory committees should be consulted on prioritizing conservation programs responding to major conservation issues.

Public Involvement

- All major plans and decisions for park lands must include public involvement in their development. This includes involvement of advisory committees and/or Aboriginal peoples, local residents and other interest groups, both local and provincial .

Partnerships

- Opportunities for partnerships will be identified for conservation projects and promoted where the conservation or education goals of the partnership are consistent with SERM's protection mandate.

- All partnerships must conform to department guidelines relative to who can qualify as a potential partner (e.g., should have compatible objectives and should not be involved with activities incompatible with the preservation of the environment).

- Partnerships providing funding or in-kind contributions for implementation of management strategies, restoration of resources, research on urgent conservation issues, or improved information management are to be considered highest priority.

Friends of.....

"Friends" groups work primarily with parks to ensure resources are protected and/or presented. They are formed by formal agreements which outline their areas of responsibilities and interests. The relationship requires ongoing liaison to be effective.

- "Friend" associations with individual provincial parks are encouraged to assist the government in fulfilling its mandate to protect natural and cultural resources and present these to the public.

6.10 Policy and Guidelines

Policy and guidelines are essential management tools to communicate consistent direction to the public and staff on how issues are to be handled. Policies are developed in a manner similar to planning, with staff and public involvement. Guidelines often provide interpretation of policy

(when and how it should be applied, as well as process). Policy and guidelines must be consistent with legislation and regulations, provide the rationale and set clear direction for the management of natural and cultural resources at the provincial and site level for both staff and the public.

- Clear and consistent policies and guidelines will be developed, communicated and implemented for the protection of natural and cultural values.

- As much as possible, policies and guidelines should conform to those of other Crown lands.

6.11 Legislation and Regulations

The Parks Act and associated regulations provide authorization to prohibit, permit and, in some cases, regulate activities. The regulations provide more specific details regarding the permitting of accepted activities and the conditions of those permits. *The Heritage Property Act* supercedes *The Parks Act* with respect to cultural resource protection.

The Parks Act, *The Parks Regulations, 1991* focus primarily on public use of parks. Matters of protection or resource use, other than those involving environmental assessment, are generally at the Minister's discretion through the issuance of dispositions. In *The Heritage Property Act* all archaeological and palaeontological objects are the property of the Crown and no research can be undertaken without a permit from the Minister responsible for the act. Provincially designated heritage structures (such as Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Stanley Mission Historic Site) are also subject to this act.

Update of Existing Legislation and Regulations

- Legislation and regulations will be revised as needed, to provide for proper authority to implement existing and new policy.

6.12 Authorization of Resource Use

The management of park lands differs from that of other lands and waters. The protection of natural and cultural resources and provision of high quality recreational and educational experiences depends on the prohibition of most resource use activities and the strict regulation of others.

Currently, a number of resource activities inconsistent with the above-mentioned values are carried out in some provincial parks. Public safety and the conservation of natural and cultural resources will take precedence over resource use.

Authorizations Required

- All activities on park lands require authorization by either an annual permit or lease. An annual permit provides access to a resource but usually not exclusive use to the land (e.g., grazing permit). A lease generally provides exclusive use to a portion of land for a set time period (recreational lease). Clear performance and land management objectives are required to ensure compliance with the park management strategy.

Authorization Fees

- At a minimum authorization fees will be established at total market value (e.g. comparable to land rent + municipal taxes). Fees may be waived where the activity is of direct benefit to the park and pursuant to the park management strategy.

Conflicting Uses/Overuse Phase-out

- Existing activities that conflict with conservation objectives (e.g., mineral development) will not be permitted beyond existing tenures and will be phased out at the earliest possible date.

6.13 Enforcement of Legislation and Regulations

Enforcement of sound management and use practices is a necessary part of natural and cultural resource management within Saskatchewan's park lands.

Enforcement of legislation and regulations is being carried out with few outstanding problems.

- All known violations that impact on natural and cultural resources will be addressed, through education, restoration and/or laying of charges/fines.

- Enforcement priorities are to be established annually to ensure that key threats or issues are identified, appropriate tools (policy direction and legislation) are available and that compliance activity is adequate to meet the protection objectives of park lands.

6.14 Compliance with Leases and Permits

Adherence to conditions and terms set out in dispositions (permits and leases) ensures that the natural and cultural resources found on park lands are protected from inappropriate development or use.

Where monitoring of resource use occurs in the park system there appears to be good compliance with the terms of dispositions.

- All authorizations (leases and permits) should include performance standards to protect natural and cultural resources and against which compliance can be measured. All new authorizations should be subject to compliance checks.

6.15 Impact Assessment and Environmental Audits

Impact assessments should be conducted for all developments and management initiatives to ensure that no activity undertaken is likely to jeopardize ecological or cultural integrity. Project proposals are required to be cleared through the environmental impact assessment process. Environmental audits will assess the impact of ongoing activities on natural and cultural values.

A draft Environmental Impact Assessment Protocol developed for the park system needs to include clear definitions of development and a section on environmental audits.

EIA Project Proposals

- All developments on park lands will be screened through the environmental and heritage impact assessment processes.

- The protection of significant natural and cultural resource values will take precedence over site development and visitor use considerations.

Concerns of Rare Species and Cultural Resources

- If an unknown cultural feature, palaeontological localities and specimens or rare species are encountered in the course of a development or management activity, any work that might impact the site will cease, and an assessment of the site will be undertaken.

Environmental Audits

- Environmental audits should be conducted for all provincial parks and the information considered in the preparation of each park management strategy.

6.16 Public Safety Risk Management

Park lands have a dual mandate of protection and public enjoyment. In order to fulfill this mandate, visitor safety must be a key consideration. Safety concerns relate to those natural or cultural resources or natural disturbances which may pose a threat to the safety of park staff and visitors.

Risk management is an approach which focuses on sites with high public traffic (e.g., core areas and trails). Continual effort is required to minimize bear/human interactions. From the conservation perspective, heritage buildings in need of repairs and aging forests pose the primary threats to public safety.

Risk Management from Natural Hazards (e.g., hazard trees)

- Public safety is the number one priority when planning for conservation management or public use, and/or undertaking conservation management activities in areas designed for public use.

Heritage Building Exemptions

- In some circumstances, cultural sites or buildings may be exempt from certain safety standards (e.g., building codes). Potential safety hazards will be posted at the site.

6.17 Candidate Protected Area Assessment

Candidate park lands are usually identified through recognized provincial system planning - Park System Plan, RAN, land use planning (Pasquia-Porcupine) or individual site nominations.

- Candidate protected areas should be properly assessed to determine their suitability for designation, type of designation and final boundaries before each area is designated. As an interim measure, lands should be reserved under *The Parks Act* to be protected from other third-party interests.

Section Seven - Management Objectives and Actions

This section of the report outlines recommended objectives and associated actions to be undertaken by SERM over the next five years. The objectives are split among those that focus on individual parks, the overall system and administrative matters.

7.1 Park-Specific Objectives and Actions

Increase the awareness by permanent and seasonal staff and the public of the quality, value and diversity of the natural and cultural resources that are found within the park lands system and the need for stewardship by all sectors (government, business operators, park visitors).

Actions:

- Discuss information, threats and management actions planned and issues concerning the park system's natural and cultural resources are discussed annually at park managers and EcoRegion meetings.
- Train all seasonal staff or give them access to information on the park system's natural and cultural resources and detailed information on their own park.
- Identify and communicate to the public, through various media, information on the resources and values encompassed within the park system and individual park lands and actions being undertaken by the province to conserve "our heritage".
- Provide support to those authors/editors who promote the values and management within articles, books, etc.

Assess risks to ecological and cultural integrity for all park lands and establish management priorities.

Action:

- Modify SERM's risk assessment model and apply to park lands.

Compile existing resource information (reports, rare and endangered species listings, etc.) on individual park lands and make it is accessible to staff.

Actions:

- Compile information into park area files and/or park program files.
- Cite annotated references on the Intranet.

Manage areas (land, waters, resources) negatively impacted by recreation or other use.

Actions:

- Establish capacity limits for areas/sites/resources and make recommendations for restoration action.
- Develop provincial policy options for reducing or eliminating uses which negatively impact resources and discuss with provincial park advisory committee.
- Identify impacted areas.
- Implement policy and restoration action.

Conduct an inventory and analysis (both natural and cultural) for at least one of the natural environment parks at most risk within each EcoRegion, and prepare a conservation/monitoring plan and incorporate the results into the park's management strategy.

Actions:

- Determine which park lands are representative of their ecoregions.
- Develop and apply a methodology to identify the natural environment park with the most significant risk to its natural and cultural resources
- Develop a methodology (standards and guidelines) for conducting park land inventories and analysis.
- Pilot the inventory and prepare conservation plan for the priority park.
- Incorporate the results into the park's management strategy.

Conduct a cultural and natural inventory and analysis for historic parks at most risk, prepare conservation plans and incorporate the results into the park's management strategy.

Actions:

- Develop and apply a methodology to identify, from among four historic parks - Cannington Manor, Fort Carlton, Last Mountain House and Wood Mountain Post - the two historic parks with the most significant risk of loss of its cultural resources.
- Develop a methodology (standards and guidelines) for conducting park land cultural inventories and analysis.
- Pilot the inventory and prepare a conservation plan for the priority park.
- Incorporate the results into the park's management strategy.

Establish and communicate research needs (scientific, traditional, historic and social) to potential partners.

Actions:

- Compile list of issues and associated research problem statements in consultation with park program and program division staff.

- Develop research guidelines, protocols, permits, reporting mechanism, etc.
- Identify support (in-kind, funding, etc.) available from SERM.
- Identify potential partners: internal or external, government, academia, etc.
- Lobby potential partners concerning participation in addressing the list of research problems.

7.2 Provincial Park System Objectives and Actions

Provide a workshop for park program and other SERM staff, focused on an ecosystem-based management approach for managing natural and cultural resources on park lands.

Actions:

- Develop workshop in conjunction with SERM Ecosystem Network and Heritage unit of MACH re: heritage responsibilities.
- Make workshop available to all permanent park program staff within two years and available to other SERM staff who interact with the park program.

Identify park lands/ecosystems to be managed as control sites (benchmarks) for a provincial ecological health monitoring system.

Actions:

- In conjunction with monitoring program staff, identify the network of control sites to be located within the park land system and other RAN sites.
- Recognize the management of these sites within their park management strategy.
- Conduct the monitoring according to the guidelines established by the provincial monitoring program.

Revise the park management strategies format and process to reflect conservation priorities and maximize integration with other department programs and priorities.

Actions:

- Incorporate Conservation Action Plan policies and an identification and risk assessment of threats to natural and cultural resources into strategy format.
- Continue integrative planning process reflecting current department roles and responsibilities, and involve all park staff and individual advisory committees.
- Provide training to those responsible for developing park management strategies.

Establish a data management system for all park land natural and cultural resources.

Actions:

- Request Information Management Branch staff to review existing/potential data management systems (Duck Mountain Provincial Park Vegetation Information etc.).
- Choose a system and pilot it for one park land area.

- Evaluate 2000 pilot biophysical GIS project at Cypress Hills Interprovincial Park for application to other parks.

Enhance capacity to manage cultural artifacts and natural specimens.

Actions:
- Ensure SERM's database system includes information on source location, sensitivity, etc.
- Upgrade storage systems and displays.
- Develop\revise collection policies and guidelines.

Undertake an analysis of the park system from the perspective of ecological and cultural integrity.

Actions:
- Identify the protection role - ecological and cultural value - of each park land.
- Analyze the ecological integrity/resilience of the existing system.
- Identify additional linkages/corridors needed to support the system.

Enhance communication/partnerships with other park agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), etc., with an interest in park natural and cultural feature management.

Actions:
- Promote information sharing/staff training/research with provincial NGOs, other jurisdictions through the Federal Provincial Parks Council (FPPC) and Canadian Council on Ecological Areas (CCEA).
- Focus reporting on an ecoregion basis to facilitate information and technology transfer.

Undertake an assessment of the potential impacts and adaptations required in park lands due to climate change.

Actions:
- In conjunction with other prairie provinces, NGOs (CCEA, etc.) submit a project proposal to the Prairie Adaptation Research Cooperative at the University of Regina to address this issue.
- Continue participation in department climate change initiative.
- Maintain communication with Parks Canada and other park agencies involved in the issue.

Establish Park Zoning Regulations under *The Parks Act*

Actions:
- Review existing policy and finalize it in consultation with the provincial park advisory

committee and Aboriginal peoples.
- Update existing park zoning plans to conform to the proposed policy.
- Submit regulation and zoning plans for cabinet approval.

Revise and update resource management policies and guidelines and develop implementation strategies to address priority issues across the park system.

Actions:
- Prioritize issues for action in consultation with the EcoRegions and program branches and the provincial park advisory committee. These may include:
  historic building restoration, or
  road and trail closure.
- Engage program branches to develop operational management guidelines dealing with specific resource issues.
- Identify problem and scope, impacts, options for management response, recommended action, etc.
- Provide staff information and training when policy and guidelines are released.

Identify sites/resources of significance to Aboriginal peoples and establish management guidelines for their use.

Actions:
- Work with Aboriginal peoples to identify sites of significance and develop management guidelines.

Revise policy and establish strategies to phase out inappropriate resource use

Actions:
- Review existing policy and uses. Determine options for ensuring that uses will be phased out, in consultation with other departments/agencies;
- Based on individual park assessments (use vs. capacity/impacts, etc.), determine issues of concern and whether a park-specific or provincial strategy is desirable to address the issue.
- Develop provincial policy options for reducing or eliminating use which negatively impacts resources. Discuss with provincial park advisory committee.
- Pursue recommended policy direction.

Enhance integration of park land protection and conservation with other protected area agencies responsible for protected areas.

Actions:
- Streamline and strengthen natural and cultural resource protection, through regular meetings of all agencies responsible for protected areas.

7.3 Administrative Objectives and Actions

Park Conservation Action Plan needs will be fully integrated in the development of SERM's strategic plan and EcoRegional and program branch work plans.

Actions:

- Communicate the direction established by the Conservation Action Plan and opportunities for integration throughout the department.
- Annually review progress towards implementation and update the Conservation Action Plan.

Initiate an active conservation partnership promotion campaign for park land.

Actions:

- Identify potential projects and partners.
- Conduct staff training on partnerships.
- Lobby/solicit potential partners.

Pursue additional funding and allocate funding resources to priority actions.

Actions:

- Identify priority actions focusing on enhancing management capacity within the EcoRegions (inventory, planning, restoration).
- Identify potential funding opportunities from existing/proposed provincial programs (i.e., Centenary Fund, Dutch Elm Disease).
- Request percentage of increased revenue be allocated to resource issues.
- Establish non-renewable resource use fees at a level above market value.
- Investigate establishment of a conservation levy on park fees.
- Subject to ministerial approval, prepare an information package/presentation and Cabinet Decision Item (CDI) for an enhanced park program budget (approx. $500,000/year) focusing on conservation.

7.4 Implementation, Review and Evaluation

Parks and Special Places Branch is responsible for reviewing the plan on an annual basis, evaluating progress, reporting to senior management and the provincial park advisory committee and updating the plan as required.

Actions:

- In conjunction with the EcoRegions, prepare the five year plan to fully implement the plan.
- In conjunction with the EcoRegions prepare an annual review and evaluation of the plan.